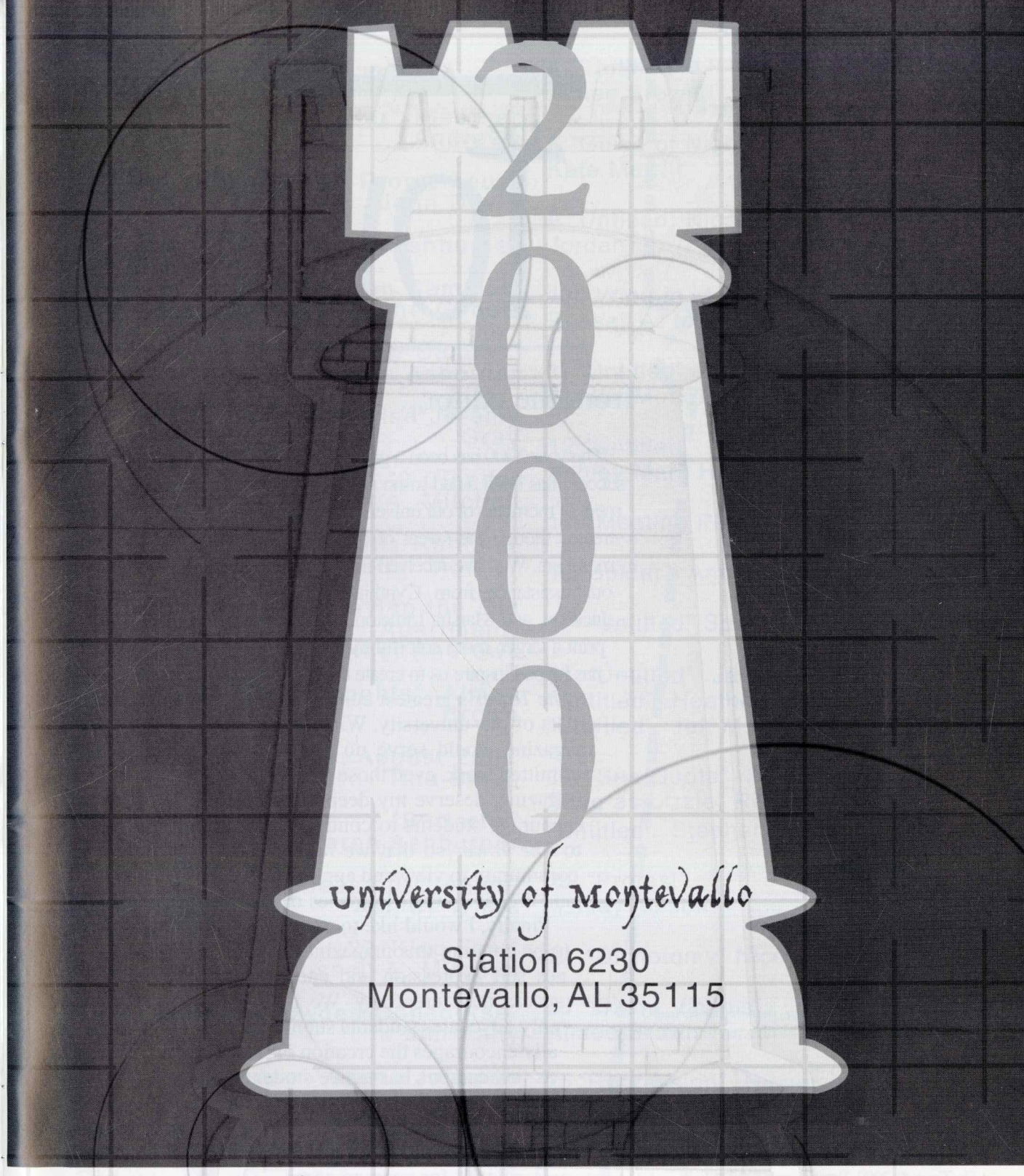
the TOWER



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the TOWER

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the TOWER

from the editor...

The year 2000 has been a great year for *The Tower*. *The Tower*'s success has been aided in no small part by the increased involvement of members of our university community. This issue has been created though the sweat of many talented and dedicated staff members. We have received immeasurable guidance and generous assistance from Cynthia Shackelford, Diane Kennedy-Jackson, and Marsha Littleton. Our patrons have enabled us to print a larger, more colorful magazine and their encouragement has helped inspire us to create the best magazine possible.

The Tower's greatest contributors are the writers and artists of our university. Without their submissions, our magazine would serve no purpose. All students who submitted work, even those who weren't featured in the magazine, deserve my deepest thanks. I would like to encourage students to continue submitting their work to *The Tower* so that we may continue to allow our community to view and appreciate the extensive talent and creativity that flourishes on our campus.

Finally, I would like to express how fortunate I feel to be creating this magazine at a university that values self expression and encourages its students to access their creativity. We have a faculty that not only advocates students submit their work, but actually encourages the creation of those works. As long as this campus has active students and faculty who value the expression of the human spirit through both writing and art, *The Tower* will be here to capture their creativity like a snapshot in time, preserving it for years to come.

Sincerely,
Ann Moeller
Editor, *The Tower* 2000

Literature

5 "I Remember Her" Heather Andrews

6 "Return to Prometheus" John David

7 "Him" Karen Ashburner

8 "My Fallen Camelot" Deanne Gilbert

9"Imaginary Castles" Karen Asburner

10 "The Old Man at Sunrise"Jeremy Gray

10 "9 friends" Russell A. Mitchell

12 "Senioritis Ranting" Ann Moeller

14 "Thoughts of Leaving the Old Apartment" Heather Andrews

15 "For Peaceful Thoughts" Aimee Brown

16 "Evening, August 25th" Tina Bilich

"Butterfly" Karen Ashburner

17 "Pleasant Dreams" Ashley White

20 "King Test" Russell A. Mitchell

21 "On the Crowded Concourse" Jim Fahy

22 "Disease" Jaime Johnson

23 "Silent Screams" Deanne Gilbert

27 "My Mind is Blank" Anonymous

28 "Monkey Stew" Karen Ashburner

29 "Intercessors" Jeremy Gray

30 "The Missed Note" Thomas Moore

34 "Fireflies" Joy Lewis

35 "Untitled" Shelly Cook

Art

4 "Untitled" Aimee Brown

6 "Guise of Night" Kate Merritt

9 "Untitled" Nicole Jordan

10 "Wind in My Chops" Russell A. Mitchell

11 "Untitled" Ashley Mark Harris

12 "Untitled" Ashley Mark Harris

14 "Meeting Place" Jeff Daly

16 "Spider" Ann Moeller

17 "Untitled" Spencer Sholtz

18 "Untitled" Jaison Mirandy
"Untitled" Heather Adams
"Untitled" Jeff M. Daly

19 "See Quote" Stephen Haas
"Meg as Lizzie" Rebekah Sanders
"Untitled" Stephen Wynn

20 "Protest" Ashley Allison

22 "Dichotomy" Nicole Jordan

23 "Silent Victims" Aimee Brown

25 "Regression" Nicole Jordan

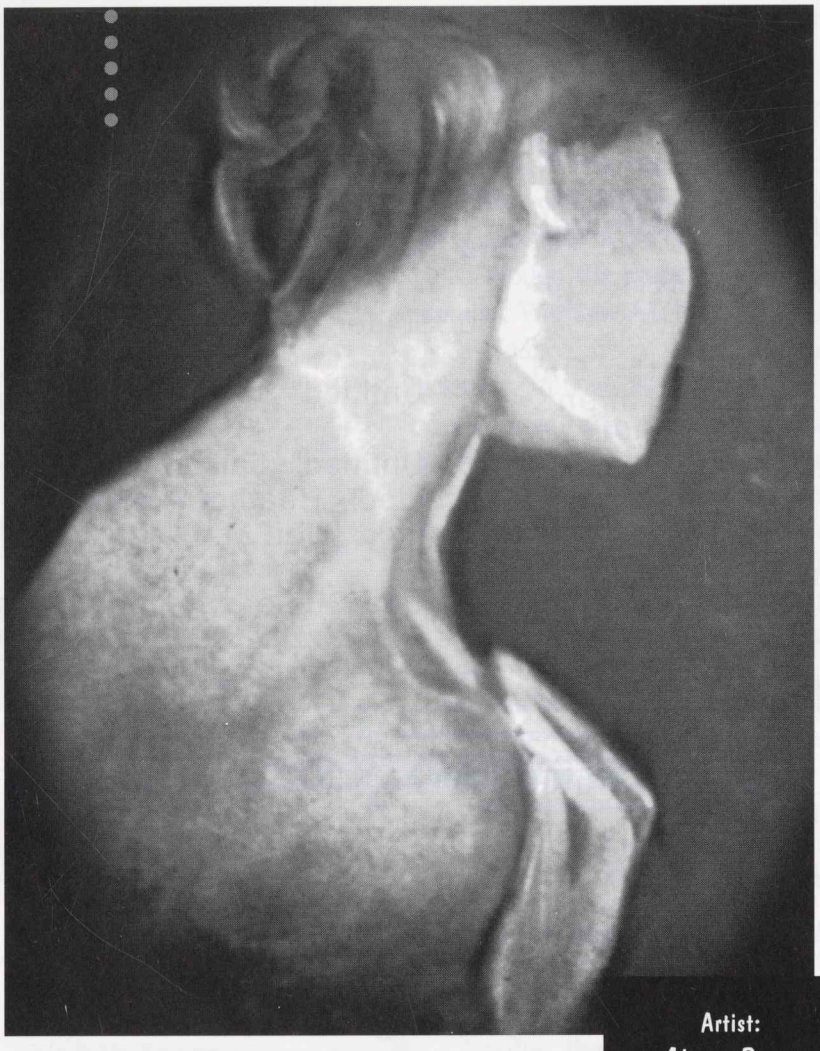
26 "Untitled" Kristie Pickett

28 "Untitled" Stephen Wynn

30 "Untitled" Jaison Mirandy

32 "Fruit-eating Fruit" Jason Michael Ardovino

35 "Untitled" Kristie Pickett



Artist:
Aimee Brown

I remember her

Through my hazy cloud of self-doubt and confusion

Her carefree dances haunt my dreams.

Not long ago she had cared for me,

At one time she had known how to take away the pain I hid behind my smile.

A dark shadow of that day crosses my mind — when she called for me

She was perched on the edge of the bed

She looked so small

I was a different person then —

I didn't need her.

She restricted me with her narrow thoughts and frail body.

I did nothing —

Something

She had to go . . .

I had to let her go

Now the memories of the person that was once there must die

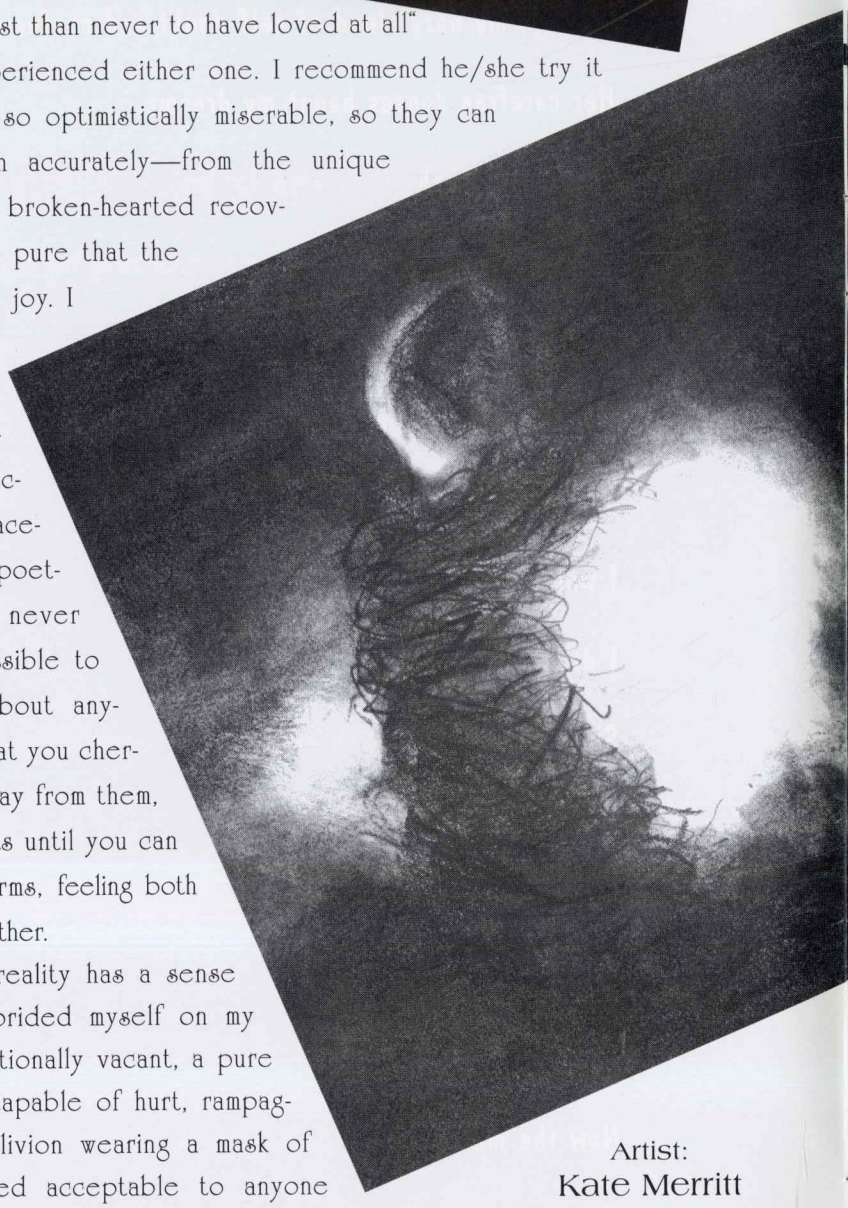
But they won't die . . . they stay with me

Like the scent of dark must that lingers still in the air.

Author: *Heather Andrews*

RETURN TO PROMETHEUS

Whoever said "Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" obviously never experienced either one. I recommend he/she try it before giving advie so optimistically miserable, so they can rethink the situation accurately—from the unique point-of-view of the broken-hearted recovering from a love so pure that the soul learns to bleed joy. I never considered love as a reality, merely a diversionary tactic used in fiction as well as a space-filling time piece in poetry. That is, I never believed it was possible to feel that deeply about anything to the point that you cherish even the time away from them, just counting moments until you can hold them in your arms, feeling both hearts tremble—together.



Artist:
Kate Merritt

Of course, reality has a sense of ironic humor. I prided myself on my coldness. I was emotionally vacant, a pure machine no longer capable of hurt, rampaging my way into oblivion wearing a mask of humanity that seemed acceptable to anyone that didn't look too closely at the edge of this elemental being I had forged through years of pain and fire. I was more than human—I was also less. Worry was beyond me. Any cares were gone, to be honest. I simply existed in a constantly almost-primal state—unforgiving, without anger, and able to accept anything.

Anything, that is, except her. We were introduced by a mutual friend, and first met at her apartment barely a week after I had first heard her name. Her roommate answered the door (a fairly plain girl, not someone I could think fondly of, if I thought of her at all). The first thought I had about the apartment was that it was adequate for sustaining life, actually. I had started a survey of the place, surveying it for any possible threats that needed to be dealt with. There was a

TV, an Atari (outdated), an in-wall bookcase, and a daybed that served as a couch. Nothing unusual—no threats or danger. Or so I thought, for on the couch sat something I could not comprehend, someone so attractive, with eyes that stretched out and filled the void between us. I could not stop looking at her, and if I did stop, I was thinking of looking at her. She was beyond words; pale, soft skin, as if sculpted of bone or alabaster, delicate features, a stark contrast to the jet-black hair that fell onto her shoulders. And the eyes, dear God, I cannot begin to tell you how many times I have been lost in them. Eyes of a stunning blue-gray, soothing like a summer rainstorm falling on a field of forgotten wishes. I was enraptured: No mortal should be able to look at such uncompromising beauty such as this. I should have left right then and there without so much as a second glance, but I was not myself anymore. I was in awe.

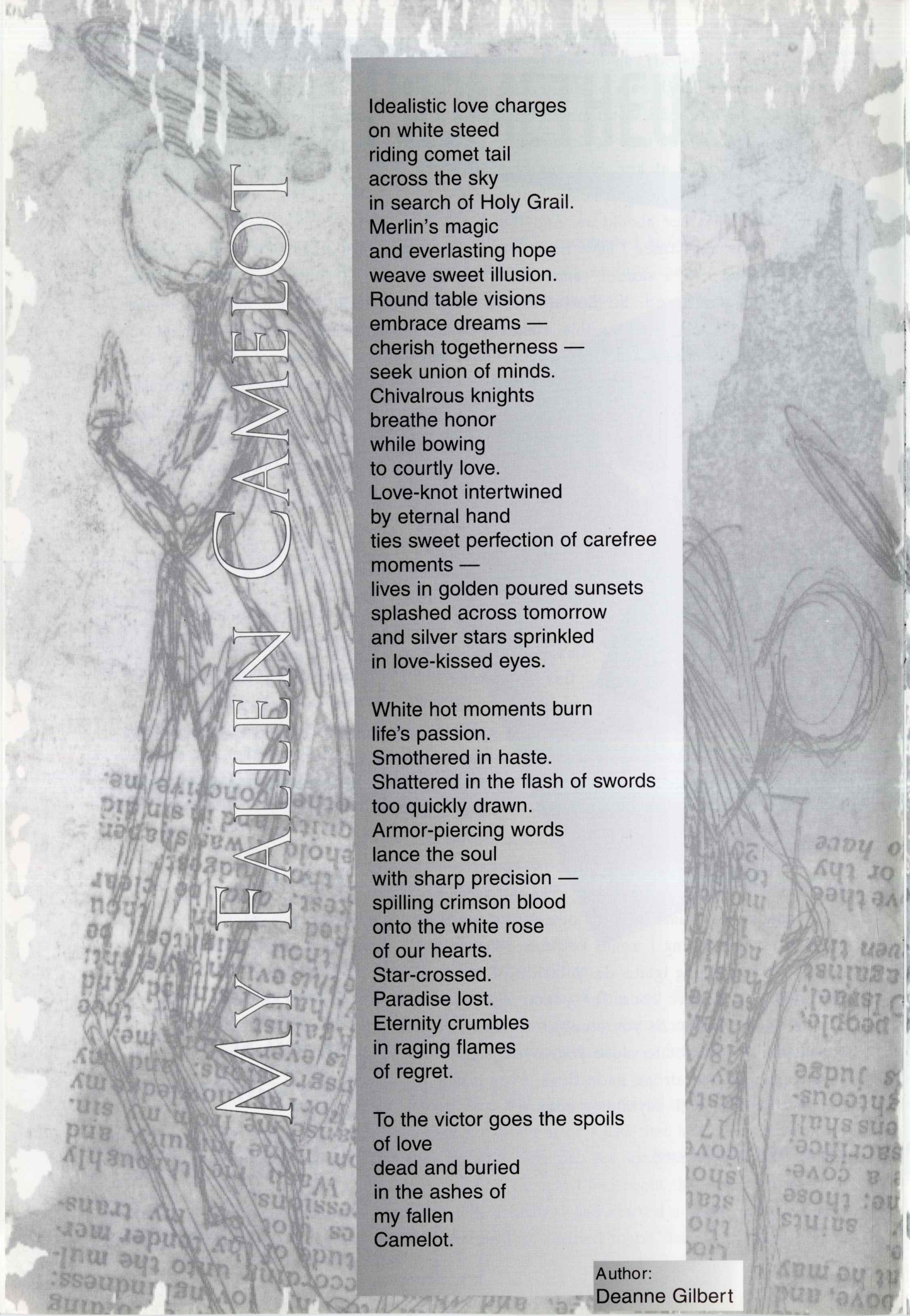
Then I remembered to breathe. She had really taken my breath. I questioned my sanity, was this a dream? "Hi, I'm Katie." A voice like crystal wind chimes coated with silver, but rare, melodic. It also proved she was real. Damn! I wasn't dreaming this. At this point, I should say the 'machine' over-weighing every phrase, storing everything she said into memory, to be analyzed later when I had the chance. Unfortunately, this machine had a minor flaw in its mechanics, a flaw so minute, I hardly noticed it at all. It began to gnaw at my armor of invulnerability. I was beginning to experience a feeling so foreign to me that I was almost uncomfortable. I was, I was feeling... Hope? Hope. This angel had given me what was trapped inside Pandora's box when the lid slammed shut, and I possessed it. She had given me—the unreeling emotional disaster of emotion, something I could not, something I would not comprehend. I felt a spark of something ignite deep inside of me. It was like being in a dark room for years, and someone throws on the lights. As you stumble, trying to regain your sight, you forget to close your eyes. I could not stop looking at this dream made flesh, even if she was blinding me with such unyielding beauty.

Author: Erik Logon (pen name)

HIM

He moves.
And when he moves
he swaggers like rain
across empty alleyways
and forgotten streets.
His face tells the story
of broken vines
that fight their way
through cracks
and hang
on long-dead trees
left to rot
where they stand.
He moves.
In unspeakable ways
that say so much
and leave me
without words,
like a honey-filled
mouth,
so sweet.
He moves.

Author:
Karen Ashburner



MY FALLEN CAMELOT

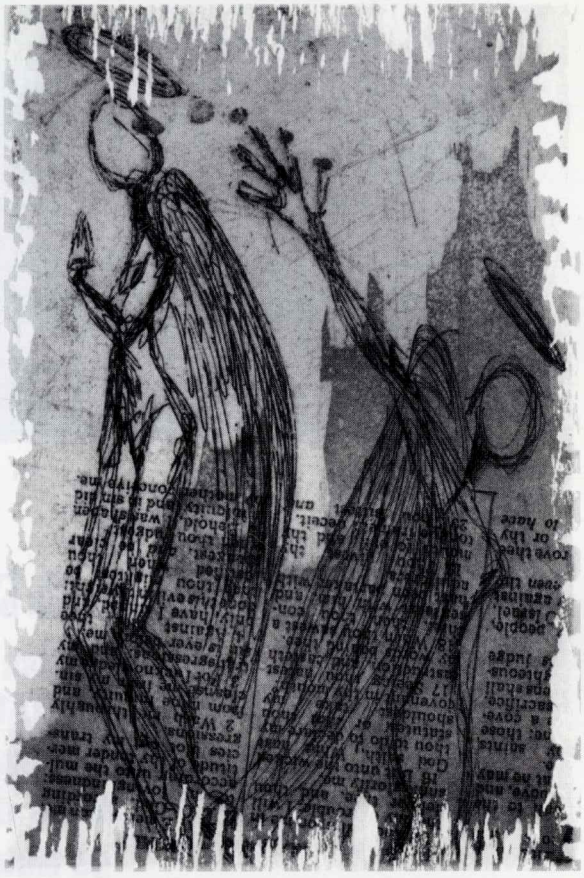
Idealistic love charges
on white steed
riding comet tail
across the sky
in search of Holy Grail.
Merlin's magic
and everlasting hope
weave sweet illusion.
Round table visions
embrace dreams —
cherish togetherness —
seek union of minds.
Chivalrous knights
breathe honor
while bowing
to courtly love.
Love-knot intertwined
by eternal hand
ties sweet perfection of carefree
moments —
lives in golden poured sunsets
splashed across tomorrow
and silver stars sprinkled
in love-kissed eyes.

White hot moments burn
life's passion.
Smothered in haste.
Shattered in the flash of swords
too quickly drawn.
Armor-piercing words
lance the soul
with sharp precision —
spilling crimson blood
onto the white rose
of our hearts.
Star-crossed.
Paradise lost.
Eternity crumbles
in raging flames
of regret.

To the victor goes the spoils
of love
dead and buried
in the ashes of
my fallen
Camelot.

Author:
Deanne Gilbert

Imaginary Castles (for Alexis)



Artist:
Nicole Jordan

Sand
stuck on wiggling toes
and little fingers
wet with grit.
Forgotten pails
left to drift on waves
form castles built with great detail
yet washed away with little regard
for such tireless work.
Dusk will fall soon as
wet tears fall on fat cheeks and
salty water claims the land that once was
hers
only to give back again come morning.
Wipe your eyes, sweet child
and feel cold water on hot skin
as warm wind circles around
your tiny laughter
and carries with it
a memory of you
back to the shore
ever marching
never ceasing
not yet made
but seen by me
as if it were.

Author: KAREN ASHBURNER

It's A Feeling

Beyond poetry, chemistry, and clever talk
Beyond heart, soul, and eternity
Beyond treasured exchanges, the distance that separates, and sweet kisses
Beyond words, life, lust, and love
there is us

Author: Kerri Carruth

Artist:
Russell A. Mitchell

"9 Friends"

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Author: Russell A. Mitchell

The Old Man at Sunrise

I slept the whole night through,
Huddled on the back seat of the station wagon,
My small body rolled with the motion of the long,
Green car.

My eyes opened in a crescent to see the sun rise,
The glowing golden sphere bleeding against the nocturnal,
Green sky.

On the roadside, a man stood hunched as he sang,
His body swayed as our car passed him by,
He clapped the hands of his long arms,
Covered by a torn, green jacket.

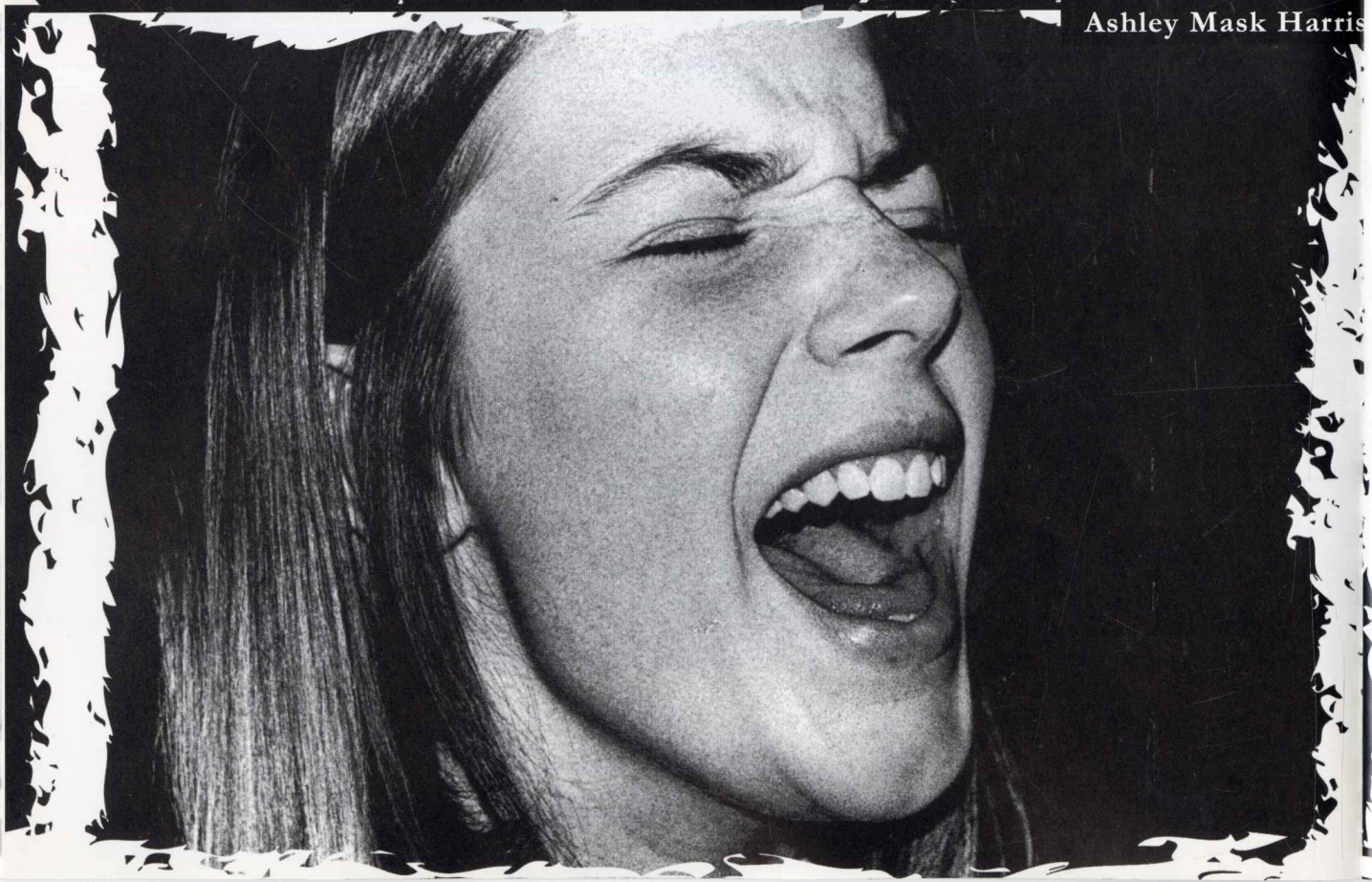
Author: Jeremy Gray

Artist:
Ashley Mask Harris

There is nothing in my head.

I want to escape. I want to leave this place and go where there is adventure. I am fighting for independence in my mind, while I wait to be finished with my confinement. "Let me out!" I'm screeching loudly. I don't care anymore. I do not want to be a child, but I do want to play. Release me. I want to shoot across the sky. I do not desire recess; I desire freedom. I am going to get a van, fill it with my friends, and we're going to run. We're going to disrobe and splash into the ocean. Throw the cap high and dive in.

Take the safety net away. I need to be scared. I am taking the trident of Poseidon if I have to wrestle it from



Artist:
Ashley Mask Harris

Senioritis RANTING

him. Challenge me. Bring it on. The ocean flows powerfully and permeates my skin. The salt will draw out my impurities and I will conquer the summer, the boredom, the bitterness, and the world. Cleanse me.

The wind will dry me off, give me goose bumps, and invigorate me. I will take action. I will kiss, slap, and beat you raw, and laugh. Come with me. The sun is roasting. I want to burn on the beach, and bake into brick. Strengthen me. Get me ready to work, after this frolic on the shore. I need to be covered in grit, sand, and let my toes find sea shells. I will stare into the seashell, hold its jewels in my eyes, and learn its secret, so I can make my own. Maybe I will kick a rock and stub my toe.

If coal could double in size and stretch before being squeezed into a diamond, it would.

If coal could double in size and stretch before being squeezed into a diamond, it would.

I anticipate pressure. I anticipate an invocation to work hard, to growth, and to success. I want to look older and act younger. Hmmm...but goodbye? To be torn from my mentors and my frienships is like being shattered into pieces, but I guess I need it to happen, just as a child should break a window and have to face the consequences.

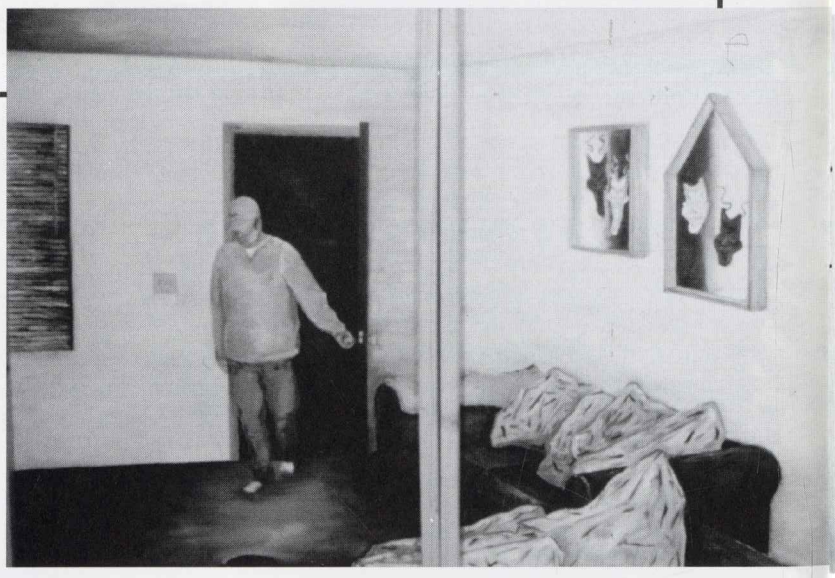
Scream again. Let me start anew. Let me enter the world.

Author: Ann Moeller

Thoughts on leaving the old apartment...

I pace about my dirty apartment
Naked and forlorn.
The bed is in a different place now, the sheets are still a mess
The counter has been clean now for many months
The candles are still frozen in time.
My body makes melancholy movements.
The stove has been cold for a while
I haven't been cooking lately.
I am never going to get the bathroom packed up.
I still have a hard time reaching that spot on my back in the shower
The bed is in a different place now, I don't know if I like it.
Why should I care? It will be moved soon anyway.
I now understand how cold I keep this place.
I've had to add on two more blankets.
The bed is in a different place now, my thighs still get hot at night.

Author:
Heather Andrews



For Peaceful Thoughts

For peaceful thoughts in a billowed quiet,

Restful sleep to awake with a kiss.

Not shouts of madness forcing me to riot,

Turning sanity of mind to plunging abyss.

Memories of childhood swinging from unselfish trees,

In summertime on grassy fields, unshaded noon.

My hands were darkened shelling black-eyed peas.

My dream, my hope was surrendered too soon.

When once my vision ended, shattered crystal,

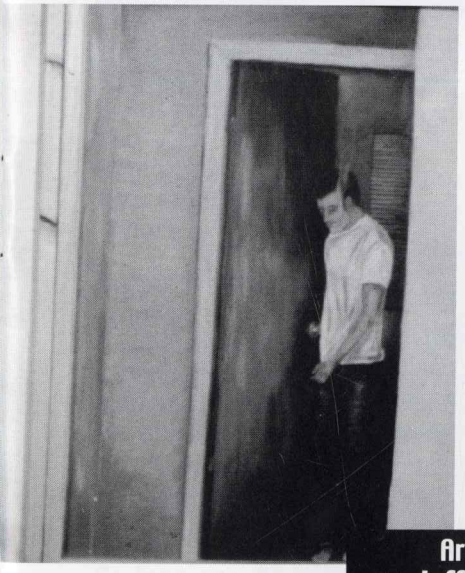
Now in prison, heart tortured with the hateful bar,

Like mother's rejection-affection with a pistol,

Must have played her like a lover's guitar.

Hours I have spent. I fought and brooded,

Will my story like hers, likewise concluded.

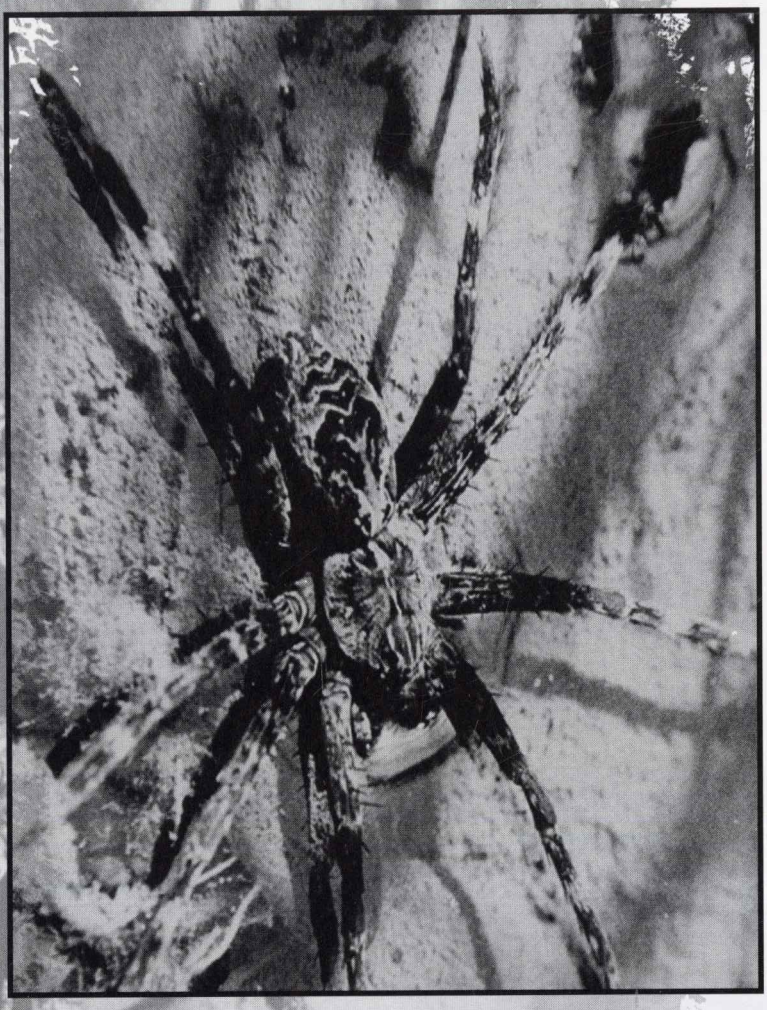


Artist:
Jeff Daly

Author:
Ainee Brown

BUTTERFLY

**A hungry spider watches,
waiting,
with vampire fangs
and jaws like steel
as crumpled wings
struggle
in a tangled web.
Twisting, turning,
as the hapless victim
feels the sting of death's
embrace
and the blood of life is
drawn
to nourish another.
Insidious trap.
Spun by the burning itch
of desire that never releases
its venomous hold.
Ingenious trap.
Amazing how you hold us
tight
and deceive us so easily.
Blind eyes are now believ-
ing
that the bite of passion
will not leave us red and
sore.
Consumed by your sting,
we scratch harder
and are plagued,
body and soul,
with the poison you inflict.
We do not bother to struggle,
freedom will come soon
enough.
Its face will show a different
guise
than we were led to believe,
yet we will be satisfied
in one another
and want
for nothing.**



Artist: Ann Moeller

Author: Karen Ashburner

Artist: Spencer C. Shoults

Pleasant Dreams...

You fell into my dreams last night—
Your voice—a comfort,
in a not-so-comforting world.
An eyelash tear fell from my cheek,
as I made a wish—
praying that I would awake from this dream.

To somehow find you there—in reality—
& not just another passing vision.
You—staring back at me,
with an honest smile,
eyes gleaming—
waiting for my words.

But as fate has it,
I awoke,
to an empty room—
a silent enemy.
And so, I am left now to wait,
for another night—
where dreams fulfill,
and peace rains.

Where you and I collide as we once did.
So long ago it seems,
So long ago—

Author: Ashley White

Evening, August 25

I STUDY YOUR SKIN
SALLOW AND SAGGING ON YOUR ONCE
BEAUTIFUL FACE
YOUR EYES ARE CLOSED
YOUR MOUTH SLIGHTLY AJAR;
AS YOU TAKE EACH BREATH IT
CATCHES AND RATTLES IN YOUR LUNGS.
I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU DIE FOR THREE
MONTHS NOW.
THIS IS NOT SIMPLY A SPECTATOR SPORT.
I'M DYING WITH YOU, DADDY.

I'VE BEEN TAKING NOTES ON EACH PAINED
EXPRESSION
THE DEEPENING OF YOUR WRINKLES
THE HOLLOWING OF YOUR EYES
THE FADING OF YOUR SMILE.
THERE IS A SILENCE DUE TO THE ABSENCE
OF YOUR LAUGHTER.

YOU SLEEP AND I STUDY YOU.
AND SO WE SIT.

YOUR I.V. DRIPS BRAIN-CANDY,
MORPHINE TO DISTRACT YOU FROM THE
PAIN.
I MONITOR YOUR CHEST TO SEE
IF YOUR HEART STILL BEATS
IF YOUR LUNGS STILL WORK.
YOUR FACE IS NOW EXPRESSIONLESS.
I WONDER IF YOU KNOW THAT I'M HERE
I ASSUME THAT YOU DO.
I TELL YOU THAT I LOVE YOU
UNDER MY BREATH I SING YOU OUR SONG
THE ONE YOU SANG WHEN I FELT LIKE
I COULDN'T GO ON.

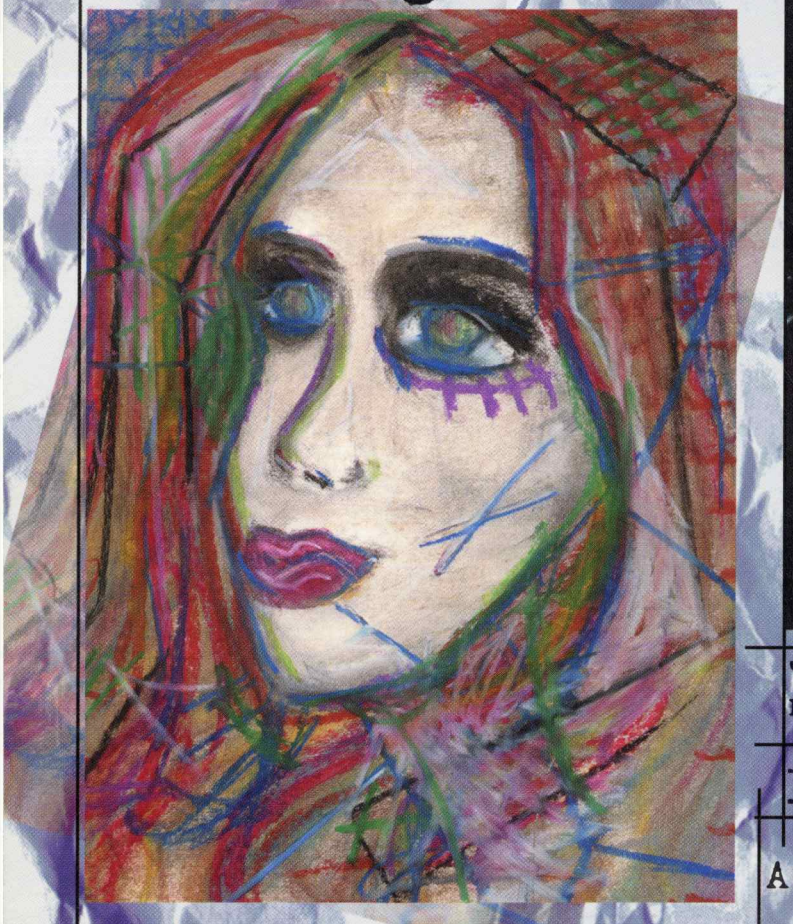
I COUNT THE NUMBER OF TIMES
YOUR CHEST RISES AND FALLS
ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE
I KISS YOUR COOL FOREHEAD
AND CHECK YOUR I.V.
SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE-
I TAKE IN A BREATH AND I WAIT.
I CLOSE MY EYES
CLOSE MY FINGERS AROUND YOURS
AND EXHALE.

AUTHOR: TINA BILICH

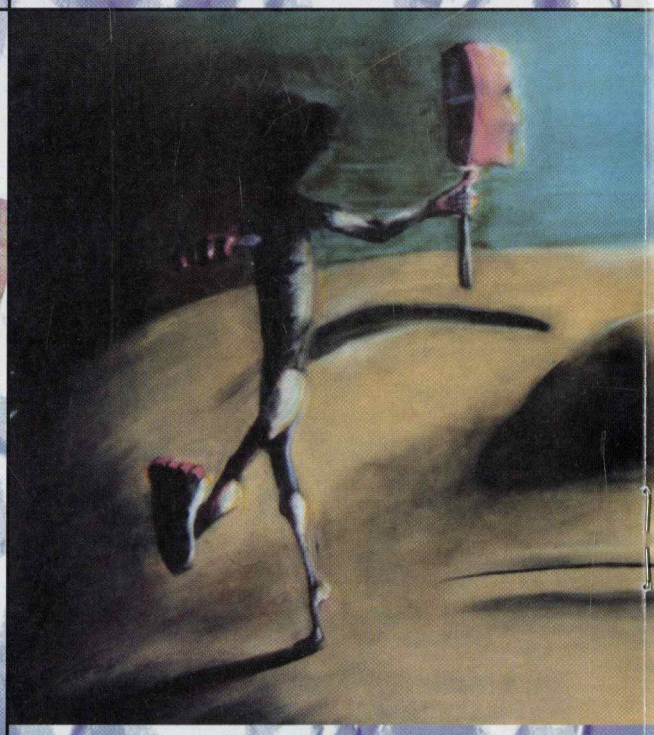
Art Gallery

Artist: Jaison Mirandy

Artist: Jeff M. Daly



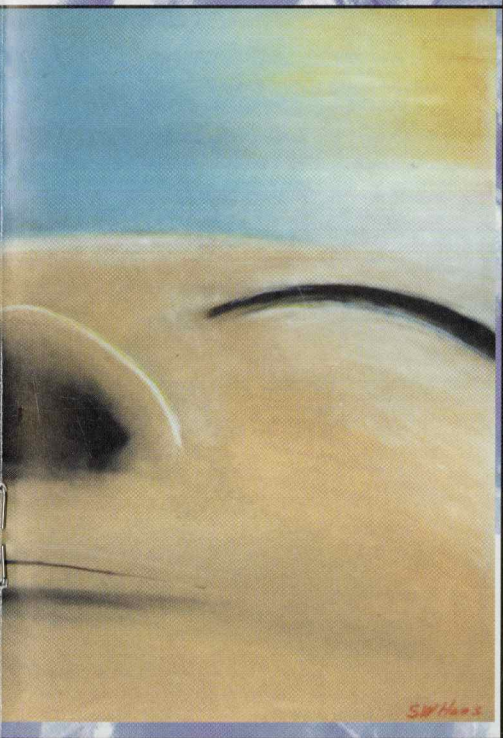
Artist: Heather Adams



"There is a principle which is a bar agai
proof against all arguments, and which ca
to keep a man in everlasting igno
-that principle is contempt prior to investigat
- Herbert Spencer

Artist: Stephen Haas Sr.

ARTIST: STEPHEN WYNN



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ARTIST:
REBEKAH SANDERS

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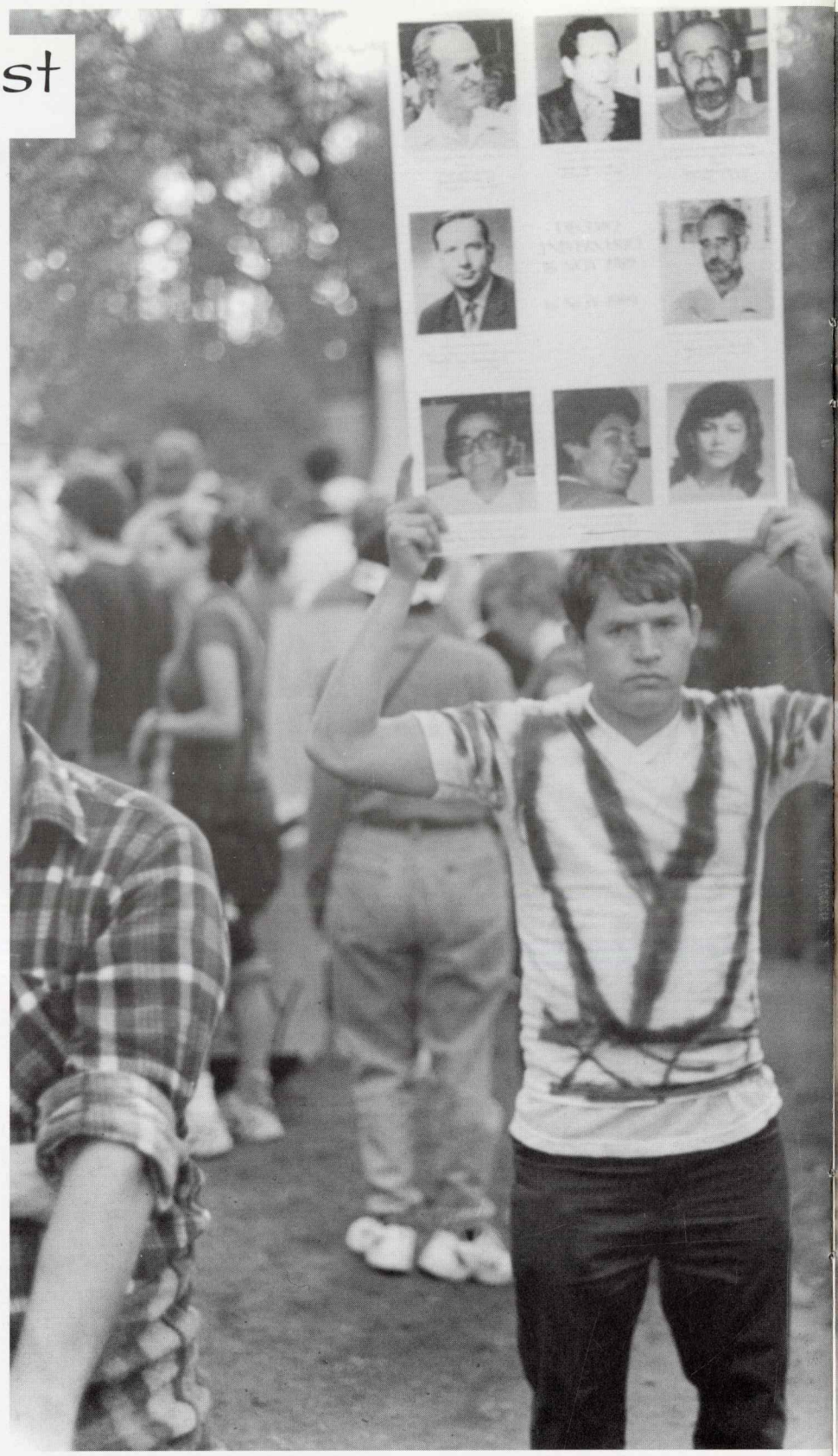


Author:
Russell A. Mitchell

Artist:
Ashley Allison

Living on leftovers
keeping a close eye
on time
which has flown by
too fast and
keeps you up too late
when you realize
how much that you have left–

ON THE CROWDED CONCOURSE

"Thanks for the flowers"
you write over and over
again and again:
condolences and coffee
the only things keeping you going
along with the postmortem plumage
that, with any luck,
won't die as well.

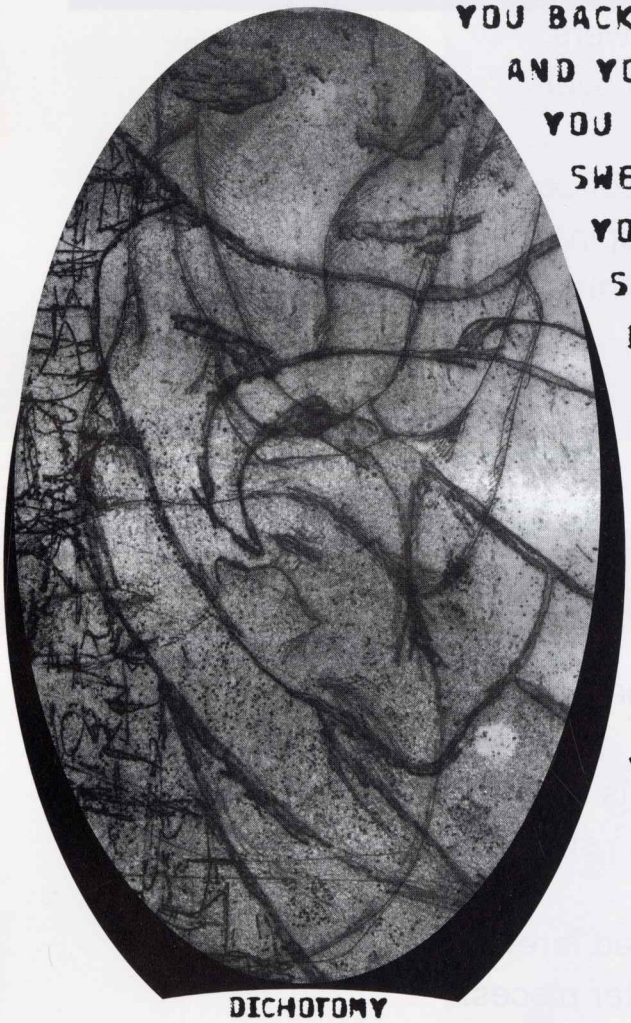
But now,
After you've cramped up your hand
And after you realize how long
that you've stared at your own eroded reflections
in a window that hasn't been
clean for weeks,
your only thought is that of
children in the train stations:

how staring is a sad farewell
to those off to better places.

Author: Jim Fahy

Disease

THE SMELL OF BLOOD IS IN THE AIR
OF ROT, DECEIT , AND LIES,
LIES THAT RUN FROM YOUR MOUTH
AS THICK AND BLACK AS THE INK FROM MY
PEN
AND YOU SAY YOU COULD NEVER
HURT ME
AS YOU THRUST THE KNIFE IN ME AGAIN.
IT'S JUST LIKE THE FIRST TIME
AND THIS CERTAINLY ISN'T THE LAST.
YOU BACK AWAY AND SIT
AND YOU CRY FOR MY INJURIES,
YOU CRY AS BLOOD MINGLES WITH
SWEAT.
YOU MOURN THE DESTRUCTION OF MY
SOUL
BECAUSE IT BELONGED TO YOU,
IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT
BUT IT WAS A LIFETIME FOR ME
AND ANOTHER LIFETIME IT WILL
TAKE
TO SCRUB AWAY THE BLOOD THAT
STAINS ALL IT TOUCHES
AND YOU CAN'T SAY
YOU WEREN'T TOUCHED.



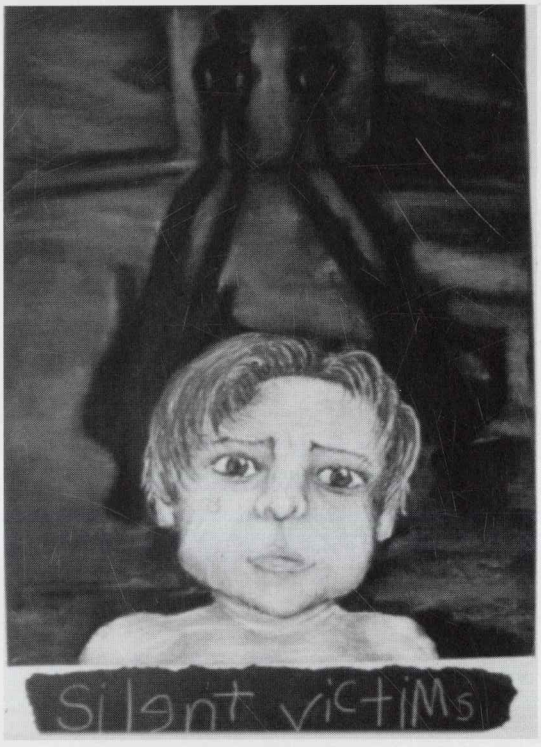
DICHOTOMY
ARTIST: NICOLE JORDAN

AUTHOR:
JAIME JOHNSON

Silent Screams

Amy's hollow, brown eyes echoed her misery. "Daddy hit mommy again," she whispered to the doll hugged tightly in her arms. It was a secret that rolled hesitantly off her lips, even in the quietness of the darkened room.

As she said the words, and heard the raised-voice signal that it was beginning again, Amy shrank back into the corner and became a shadow, as invisible as her silent screams. Her tiny shoulders shuddered with convulsive sobs. Her mind turned inward, pretending she did not hear the hurled threats and stuttering screams exploding from her parents' bedroom. In desperation, her clinched-eye tears cradled her to sleep, into the sweet embrace of her only escape from torment.



Artist:
Aimee Brown

This had been the way of things for as long as she could remember. The next morning, her father wore his usual "nothing out of the ordinary" face that he put on like a mask for anyone that might be watching. But no one ever watched. No one heard the silent screams. No one saw the invisible bruises and scars that lined the hearts of both Amy and her mother. No one knew. No one would believe her even if Amy could summon the courage to tell. How could it be abuse if no one could see the scars?

Her father was perfect at what he did. His words sliced away every ounce of confidence with the mechanical accuracy of s skilled surgeon. He rarely hit anymore, but then, he didn't really have to.

(story continued on next page)

His words were as menacing as a raised fist, and hit their mark just as well. Even better, because they left no telltale signs to give him away.

And so, the cycle of verbal punches and tears and hiding in corners continued, until Amy's mother did an unbelievable thing. Maybe she had received her limit of invisible scars. Maybe the threats, grown weak from overuse, had lost their intended silencing effect. Or maybe, just maybe, Amy's mother had looked into the hollow eyes of her daughter one too many times and decided enough was enough. Whatever the reason, she scraped up a small shred of courage and marched to an attorney to file for a divorce.

New threats were hurled. Amy once heard her father bellow, "I'm going to make your life hell for the rest of your days! You're going to regret divorcing me!" She quivered in fear at the menacing tone of his words. But then, as suddenly as they came, the threats subsided. Her father seemed to change almost overnight. He grew quiet. He began to shower affection on Amy. It was almost like a game that Amy's starved, little soul ravenously consumed as she hung on to each tender word he tossed her way, each brush of his hand against her mouse-brown hair or tear-softened cheeks. She almost forgot the way things had always been. She almost started believing that this man had a place for her in his heart, until the game took a new twist.

It happened at the park. Amy's father placed a brown paper bag on the bench between them and, as if taking Amy into his deepest confidence, whispered words of love and promise that Amy had never before heard him utter. Her mind was a merry-go-round filled with "Daddy's little girl" and "help your daddy" and "things will be different." She clung to his promises as if clinging to a life jacket in a storm-wracked sea.

Amy's hollow eyes began to glow with a timid flame of life. She was eager to please, desperate to continue the game. With surprisingly little coaxing, the words dripped from her lips without connecting to her fevered brain. Anxious to hold this connection, this newfound bond with her father, Amy did not even realize her own part in the betrayal. Surely her mother would understand. Surely no harm could come from something so simple as playing a game with her father. Seeing the smile on her father's face, believing that she was somehow gaining his favor for the very first time, the words coursed through Amy's veins and poured out of her mouth like a river raging out of control.

Amy was not present when the tape recorder was produced in court. She did not see her mother's face when the accusations were made. She did not see the droop of her mother's shoulders or bow of her head as she

listened to false charges of neglect, the childish account of boyfriends parading in and out of the house, and the rehearsed words of praise for Amy's father. All she saw was the pain in her mother's eyes when she arrived home that afternoon. A thunderbolt of fear cut through her when her mother informed her that she would have to appear in court, and that her testimony would decide whether or not she lived with her father. Would the judge order them to stop the game?

Outside the courthouse, Amy was wrenched away from her mother and found herself held tightly by her father's iron grip. They walked in silence, with the father staring straight ahead and Amy's eyes glued to the cracks in the sidewalk. Her mind was a blank void of confusion, until her eyes fell upon the golden-yellow butterfly gliding just above the ground. She studied it as it lit on a leaf perched just ahead in the pathway.

What happened next would always be a mystery to Amy. She couldn't be sure if it was an accident or on purpose, a silent threat of sorts. Her father turned to look deeply into her eyes, almost pausing his steady stride, before stepping, with a strong and seemingly purposeful step, directly onto the tiny butterfly. He looked again at Amy as his foot pressed into the concrete.

Regression
Artist: Nicole Jordan

Amy's eyes widened with fear and her head jerked around to the place where his foot had been. There was nothing but a smear of yellow against the drab, gray sidewalk. She could not pull her eyes away from the death of such tender beauty. She could not pull her mind away from the fragility of life, until her father yanked on her arm and pulled her forward into the massive, stone building.

Amy's life changed that day. When asked if her father had made her say the things on that dooming tape, she did not say a word. Amy did not tell. She did not speak of the way of things. She didn't know how.

The heart of a child can be illogically loyal, even when the loyalty is undeserved. The look in his eyes made her afraid to tell. His face, the face of her daddy, made her not want to tell. And so she said nothing. She did not confirm that her father had planted the seeds for every lie that had sprouted from her mouth.

(story continued on next page)

When the judge announced his decision, Amy's mother sat in a crumpled heap, a balloon deflated of all air. She had been helpless to protect her beloved child. Amy's father wore a smirking smile on his face. It was the face of victory, victory of a battle waged for all the wrong reasons. He looked down at Amy with eyes that no longer bore any trace of the false affection of recent weeks. His fingers pressing a little too deeply into her tender flesh, a promise of what was to come, he pulled her toward the door.

Amy turned to the silent group behind her. Her mother, with red-rimmed eyes, was staring unseeingly out the window. The lawyers were gathering papers and preparing for their next cases, with Amy nothing more than a faint memory in their minds. The judge was cleaning his glasses and smiling silently to himself over a joke heard only that morning.

Amy felt herself fading into the shadows once again. The blind eyes of those around her could not see her pain. Their deaf ears could not hear her silent pleas. She felt as lost as the butterfly crushed beneath her father's feet.

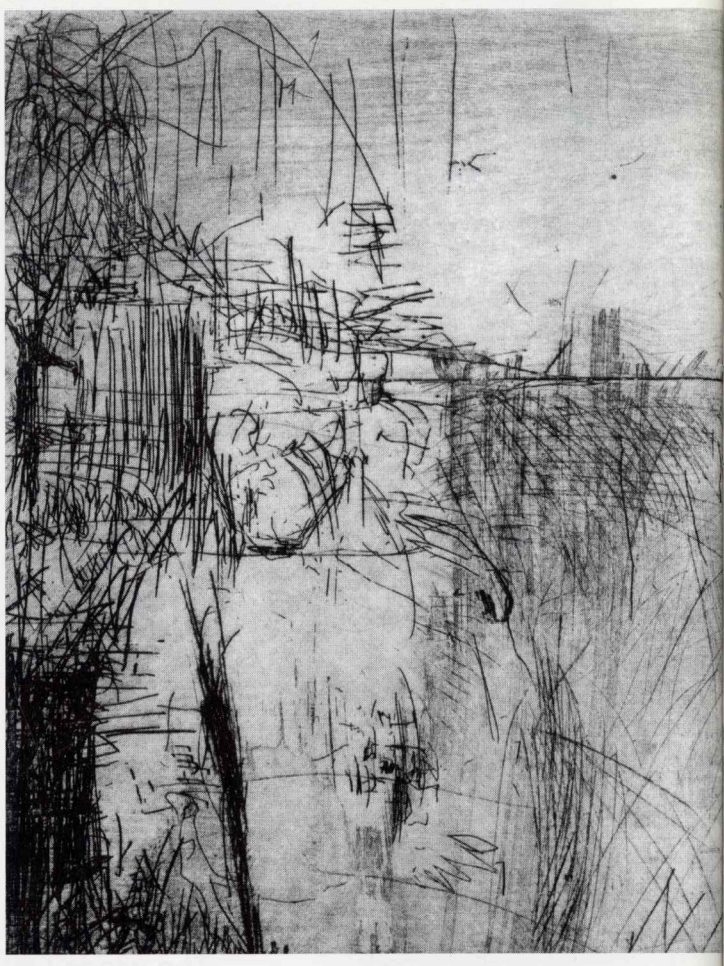
My Mind Is Blank

My mind is blank, yet running wild with unmet fear.
My heart is full, but still so empty.
Throbbing on so painfully.
My dreams have faded into reality, not fantasy, and I wonder why these were ever my dreams. Before I even leave I want to be back—
to be held in your safety like too many nights ago.
I can't go back.
The chains I loathed are unlocked.
The wings I wanted are spread.
But, I cling to the floor in fear of untold liftoff.
Self-tears roll warmly as I think of his discouraging words and try not to believe them.
Must I be so afraid of myself?
Daddy, tell your little girl that the nightmare is over and the sun is up.
7-21-99

Author: Anonymous Student

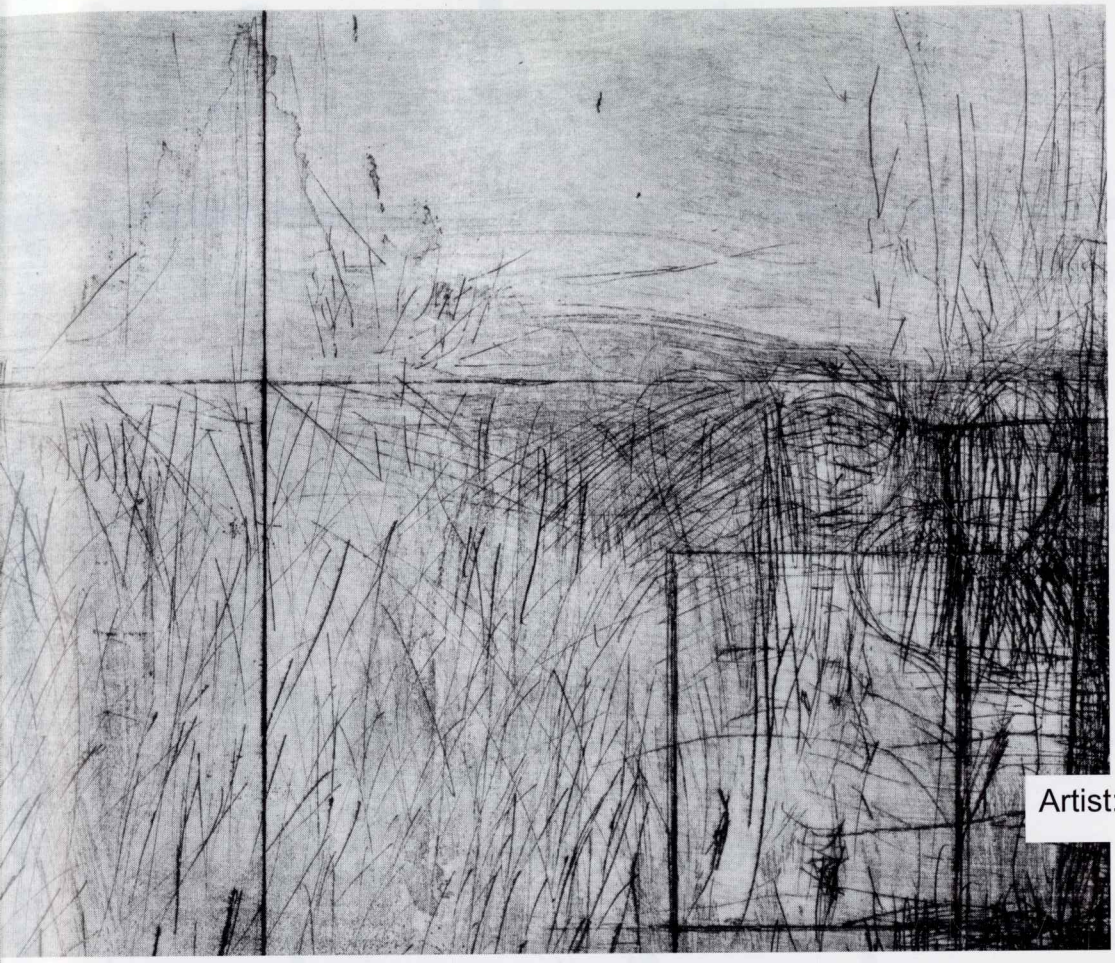
Artist:
Kristie Pickett

Monkey Stew



Fish sticker on her car
and a shiny metal cross around her neck
Mary Jane Christian is her name
thought I just call her
jesus freak.
She calls me sinner.
Sells her god to me like it's Mary Kay
and jumps on the bus to church
every time I say shit about Darwin.
Can't believe in no science man
come at her with that weird talk
about monkeys and birds cohabitating
on some island.
And maybe they be some kind of kin
to you and me?
No way, she says,
god wouldn't do no such a thing,
Says she had an uncle once
who tried to fuck her
and maybe he could be
some kind of J. Fred Muggs relation.
Always did act like a monkey at the dinner table
now that she thinks about it.
I just looked at her funny
when she said that and
she just laughed at me with her
crooked teeth,
telling me I was too young
to remember anything good
and how the world has
gone to crap
cause people like me
don't believe in God.
I just shrugged
and said I don't fit in
at no church,
done too much good in my life
to rub shoulders with all them hypocrites
and that maybe
in the future
her references to monkeys
could be a little less obscure.

Author: Karen Ashburner



Artist: Stephen Wynn

The Intercessors

The intercessors arrived unseen and unaware,
Old widows and music directors, the missionaries,
They tromped onto our porch at night.

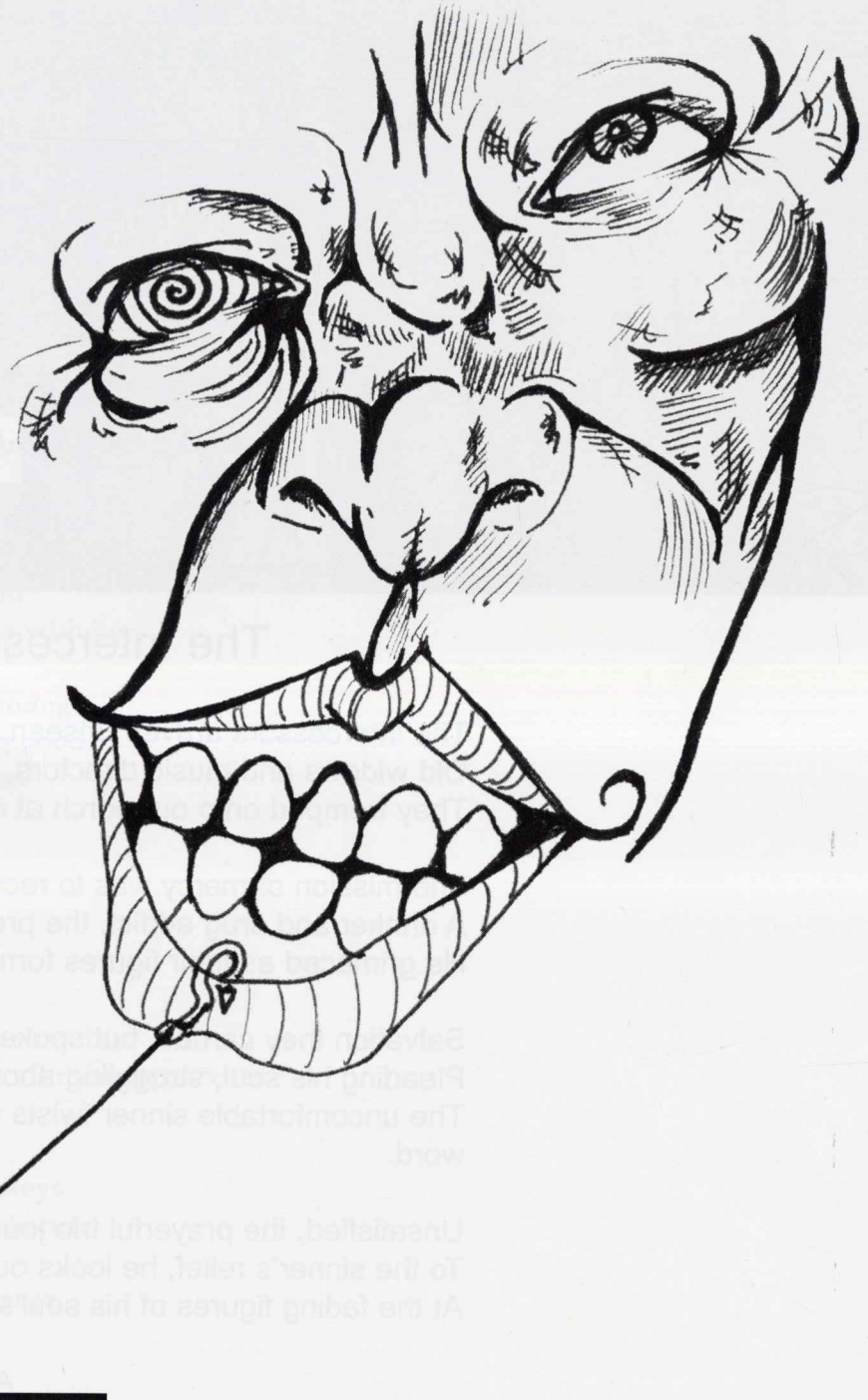
The mission of mercy was to recover the stray,
A drinker and drug addict, the prodigal son,
He grimaced as their figures formed in porch light.

Salvation they carried, but spoke in careful words,
Pleading his soul, struggling above televised sport,
The uncomfortable sinner twists with each new word.

Unsatisfied, the prayerful trio journeys on.
To the sinner's relief, he looks out the window,
At the fading figures of his soul's salvation.

Author: Jeremy Gray

THE



Artist: Jaison Mirandy

Missed Note

Gilbert had done it again. He was always getting into situations like this. What cosmic forces are at play that cause such horrible things to befall the same man over and again?

Gilbert turned to the woman in the passenger seat and proclaimed, "Why Bessie? Why?"

"It's probably because you're a drunk, idgit who likes to stab himself," replied the dead, ethereal, one-legged blues singer.

"No, not what's going on right now. I mean, what's wrong with my whole life?."

"That's what I thought you meant."

"Yeah, but I wasn't always a drunk idgit," he said defensively.

"True. You didn't get drunk until you were fourteen."

"Is this what God intended? For me to die drunk, with a self-inflicted gut wound," he waxed philosophically.

"The exit for Leflore is coming up. Slow down." Bessie stated authoritatively.

Gilbert completely ignored her and continued, "Do you think I was destined to be an idiot, or was I made into one?"

Just then, he noticed he was about to miss his exit, so he swerved wide and hit the on ramp doing sixty. Gilbert was heading west for Leflore. Leflore is west of Arrow Catcher, luckily enough. Too bad he was in the eastbound lane.

His passenger looked at him with a calm only death can provide and said, "You do realize we're on the wrong side of the road."

Gilbert promptly changed lanes and continued his soliloquy, "I can't be held responsible for my actions if they were already planned for me. Can I?"

"I meant you were on the wrong side of the interstate as a whole, not ju—"

Just then, two diesels crested the hill ahead of them.

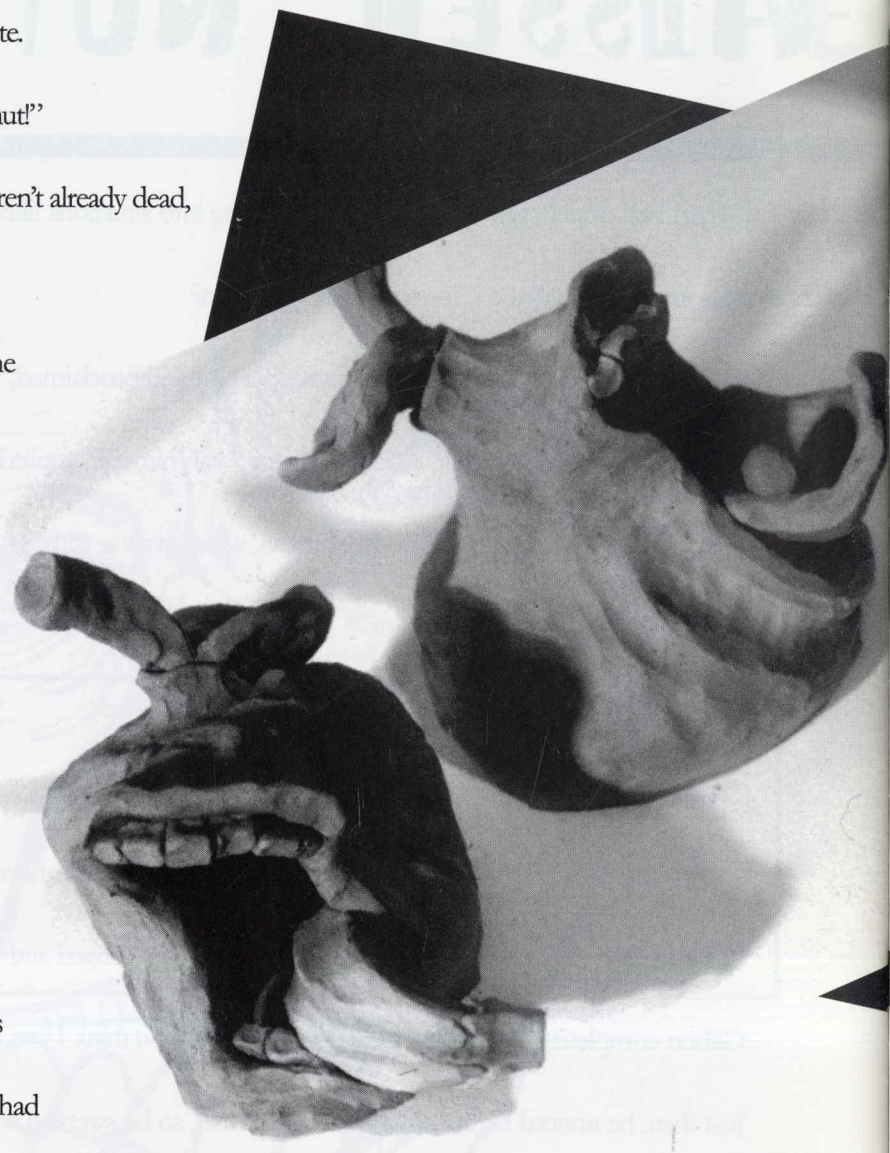
Continued on next page

Gilbert responded with his dead-cat-like reflexes and swerved the car across the median just in time to side-swipe the state trooper that had been chasing him—lights flashing—since Gilbert had gotten on the interstate.

"Save me, Jesus, I'm a jelly donut!"

"If I had both my legs and weren't already dead, I'd jump out of this car."

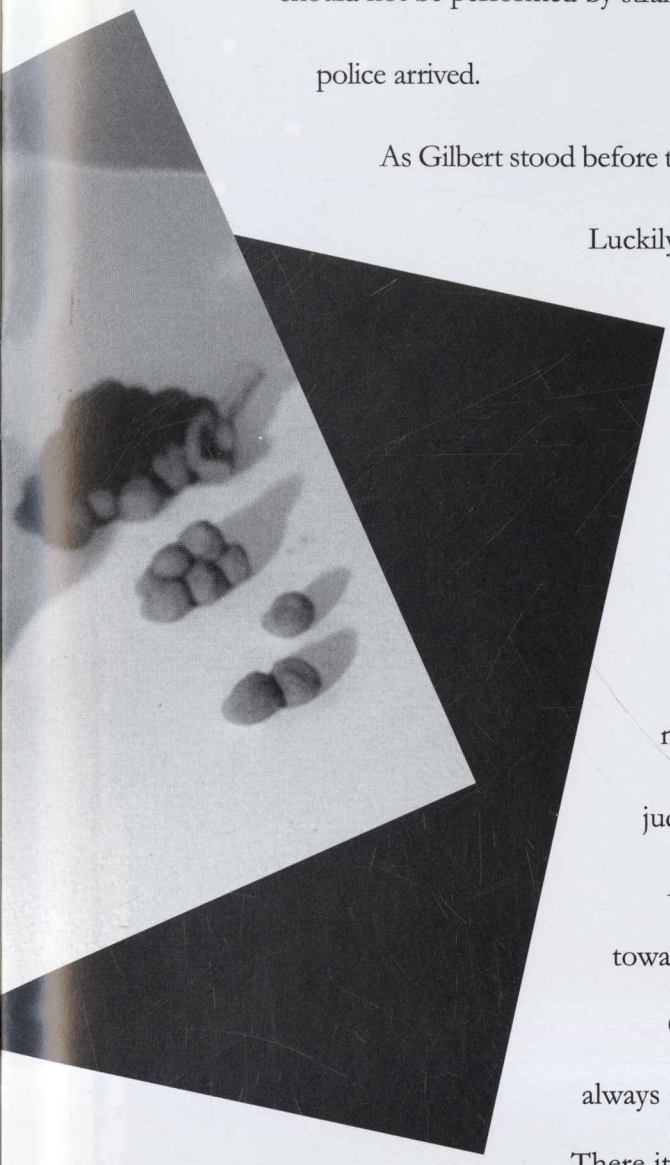
Gilbert was wondering how he would escape from the police, when he noticed the smoke coming from the trunk. Quickly, realizing that the engine was up front and if it was the gas tank, he would already be dead, it could only be one thing. His entire *Connections* magazine collection had spontaneously combusted. As if on cue, the fire melted a hole in the trunk, spewing forth two hundred pounds of flaming porno-mags into the path of the pursuing police car. The following pyrotechnic display would have made Mrs. O'Leary's cow proud.



Fruit-eating Fruit
Artist: Jason Ardovino

Gilbert made it to the hospital without further hindrance. He was stitched up by a young intern named Jack. Jack kept asking "Are you sure you want to go on? Your life sucks."

Gilbert wasn't sure if he wanted to go on, but he knew killing oneself is a personal thing and should not be performed by strangers. Just as Jack was done patching up Gilbert, the police arrived.



As Gilbert stood before the night-court judge, he was worrying what he would say. Luckily, Bessie appeared and told him what to plead. Gilbert, for once following her instructions, explained that he had a split personality that had tried to kill him with a knife and, failing that, kill him in a car wreck; making everything that happened attempted murder. Gilbert then stated he did not want to press charges. Therefore, of course, the judge had to let him go.

As Gilbert started his impounded car, he looked toward the heavens and proclaimed, "Why me, Lord?"

God appeared and said, "Everyone who's right always agrees with me. So, GET ON WITH IT!"

There it was. Gilbert's metaphor from God. It all made sense to Gilbert now. He vowed then and there to quit drinking and to beg his wife for forgiveness.

Little did Gilbert know that it really wasn't God that appeared to him, but an alien playing a mean joke. So, Gilbert's metaphor wasn't from God, it was from outer space.

Author: Thomas Moore

FIREFLIES

I have a flittered vision
like heaven on the edge of an eternity
that begins now—
grass green,
sky blue,
earth brown.
Trembling beauty.
Yet I wonder what could be seen
if these eyes weren't in my way.

I am a woman,
My chin holds parallel to the sole of my foot
when I walk,
heel, toe.
Hand of flesh
and bone, heart of blood
and fire.
Make me an instrument.

I feel a peace that passes all understanding
like fireflies flitting through the holes in my net—
life full,
spirit holy,
love pure.
And still I dream of what could be felt
if this heart wasn't in my way.

Author: Joy Lewis

An Angel
flew low
and landed
in snow—
a cold cold blanket
of crisp crisp static.
He was flat on Earth; foot footed in dirt—
So I climbed him—
to rest and stare.

An Angel, I knew,

in the light-blue hue—
a cold cold blanket of crisp crisp static.
His glowing glare-glance
ended the trance—
So I slipped down,
awakened in wonder.

Artist: Kristie Pickett
Author: Shelly Cook

Patrons

The Alabamian

Luckys Foodland Plus

Montage

Rick Delaup

Sigma Tau Delta

Walker Printing Company

the TOWER